

VIII.

HUNTERSVILLE—THE FIRST COUNTY SEAT.

For a number of years previous to the organization of the county, in 1821, Huntersville had been a public place, as merchants and tradesmen from the east would arrange to meet the hunters here and barter goods for the proceeds of the chase. It was suggested by some that Smithville would be an appropriate name for the county seat, for apparent historical reasons. The present name Huntersville, however, was strenuously insisted upon by John Bradshaw and his friends, as a special compliment to the hunters that swarmed there during the trading season, and to whose presence and patronage the place owed very much for its prosperous development.

It was for a long while after the organization of the county that Huntersville retained precedence as the principal trading place for the entire county. The largest stores were usually here. Many people would come every month to the courts, and once a year the "Big Muster" would bring out all subject to military duty between the ages of 18 and 45, and many others besides. During the superior courts and the big mus-

ters, quite a number of persons from the eastern counties would be here to sell hats, saddles, harness, stone ware, tobacco, thirty cent whiskey, and other commodities too numerous to specify. The stores and bar rooms would do a rushing business, and the horse and cattle market would sometimes be very lively. Take it altogether, Huntersville was by common consent regarded as a little place with large ways. It was no uncommon thing for Huntersville merchants to realize three or four hundred per cent on dry goods, and not much less on groceries, during the period from 1822 to 1845. When the Huntersville and Warm Springs turnpike was made, and the Parkersburg road penetrated upper Pocahontas, then stores of importance opened at Greenbank and Millpoint and in rapid succession at other points until mercantile operations have come to what they are now.

A very disastrous fire occurred in the winter of 1852 by which the most of the business part of the village was consumed to ashes. The Craig residence, two stores, and a hotel, comprising a range of buildings extending from the Presbyterian church to the corner opposite the court house. At the time there lived on Browns Mountain one of Napoleon Bonaparte's veterans who had fought in the battle of Waterloo, named Frederick Burr. He came down to view the smoking ruins and on his return he was met by a person who inquired: "Well, Mr Burr, how does Huntersville look now?" In his solemn way he replied: "It looks like a coat with nothing but the tails left."

During the war Huntersville was burned by Federal

troops sent in from the garrison at Beverly, to prevent it being a Confederate depot for military supplies.

When peace was restored between the States, Huntersville recuperated rapidly. Flourishing stores were carried on by Amos Barlow, J. C. Loury & Son, and Loury & Doyle. The farms were reinclosed, improved methods of agriculture adopted, and at this time presents a more attractive appearance than at any time in all its previous history.

The more notable days in the history of Huntersville and of the county citizenship, were the trainings and the general muster that would follow. For several years after the organization of the 127th Regiment the Brigade Inspector was Major John Alexander, of Lexington. He would bring his drummer and fifer with him, two likely colored men uniformed in scarlet like British soldiers, and were the admiration and envy of all the colored people. Some of the black boys would say that they desired no better heaven than be musicians and wear such red clothes.

When the militia regulations were modified, the colonel of the regiment would train the officers for about three consecutive days before the regimental muster. These were usually seasons of much social hilarity, and the saloons reaped lucrative returns. The musters came off in May, just after corn planting. More animated scenes were never witnessed in our county, as the throngs passed into Huntersville from all sections.

About 11 o'clock the long roll of the drum was heard. The colonel and his staff appeared at the head of the street, and paraded the street preceded by five

and drum. On their return the colonel instructed the adjutant to have the regiment formed. The colonel and staff would then disappear and retire to headquarters.

In the meantime the loud orders of the captains were heard for their men to fall into ranks, and when formed the adjutant placed them in position and then reported to the colonel that all was in readiness. The colonel and staff reappeared at the head of the regiment. Three beautiful silken flags were put in charge of the color guard. The rear rank of the regiment fell back a few paces in open order. A procession, formed of the colonel's staff and color guard, preceded by the band, reviewed the regiment, stationed the flags, and returned to the head of the regiment.

In stentorian tones the order was given to close ranks and form a column of twos, and soon the whole regiment would be on the march to a neighboring field selected for the evolutions. The field just west of the town was frequently selected, and the one back of the court house was sometimes used. Two or three hours would be passed in the evolutions. The bugle would sound the retreat, the drum and fife take up "Bonaparte's Retreat from Moscow," and the whole column would prepare to leave the field and fall back on Huntersville in slow and regular order. Having formed in open order on the street the colonel and staff, preceded by the music, had another procession to collect the flags. The color guard was led to the head of the column, the colonel dismounted, received the flags one by one, and each was saluted by the roll of the drum,

and placed away for safe keeping.

After this the regiment was disbanded, and then came the funny scenes that would require a graphic pen to describe with due justice. Cakes, beer, and something stronger were now in profuse requisition. The sun would sometimes go down leaving a large crowd enjoying the hilarity of the occasion, seemingly sorry that muster day did not last a week at least. "Tomorrow is Sunday, and there is no use in being in a hurry to get home. Let us go it while we have a chance," were some of the communications that were quite a strain to good morals.

Among the distinguished citizens of the county who were colonels of this regiment appear the names of John Baxter, Benjamin Tallman, John Hill, Paul McNeel, D. W. Kerr, James Tallman, W. T. Gammon, James T. Lockridge. David W. Kerr yet lives, and is the only survivor.

The next notable days were the superior court terms when lawyers and judges from abroad would be present and hold the courts with great dignity, being out of reach of the voters and asked nobody any favors. Their decisions were above suspicion, and but few cases were ever appealed. Such as were appealed never amounted to anything very encouraging.

The circuit judges, in the order named, were Judge Taylor, of Lexington, J. J. Allen, of Fincastle, Judge Johnson, also of Fincastle, who died while attending court in Huntersville. Judge Harrison, of Union, Judges Holt and McWhorter, of Lewisburg, and Judge Campbell, of Union.

The clerks of Pocahontas have been John Baxter, pro tem., Josiah Beard, H. M. Moffett, James Tallman, General William Skeen, William Curry, Robert Gay, and John J. Beard. The foregoing held both of the offices at the same time. A few years since the offices were divided, and J. H. Patterson became circuit clerk, and S. L. Brown county clerk. During the war William Curry was clerk, and his adventures and success in preserving the records will be long remembered, as one of the most notable instances of official fidelity in the history of the State.

The responsible office of Commonwealth's Attorney has been held by Johnston Reynolds, of Lewisburg, W. H. Terrell, of Warm Springs, D. A. Stofer, R. S. Turk, and L. M. McClintic.

The attorneys who have plead at the Huntersville Bar include such names as the following, besides those already mentioned: J. Howe Peyton, General Samuel C. Blackburn, George Mayse, Andrew Dameron, Captain R. F. Dennis, J. C. Woodson, Matthew Edmiston, F. J. Snyder, Judge Seig, C. P. Jones, L. H. and J. W. Stephenson, William McAllister, Judge Baily, Governor Samuel Price, Dr Rucker, J. W. Arbuckle, T. H. Dennis, J. T. McAllister, J. A. Preston

The resident attorneys have been T. A. Bradford, D. A. Stofer, William Skeen, H. S. Rucker, R. S. Turk, C. Osborne, C. F. Moore, N. C. McNeil, W. A. Bratton, L. M. McClintic, Andrew Price.

The physicians who have been located at Huntersville were Dr Sexton, Dr McClelland, Dr Porterfield Wallace from Rockbridge, and Dr Payne of Waynes-

boro. Dr Payne claimed to be sufficiently proficient in fifteen trades and occupations to make a living by any one, if required to do so. So far as known, Dr George B. Moffett was the first graduate in medicine to locate in Huntersville. He came in 1843. Since then the Scott brothers, Howard & Archie, Dr Matt Wallace, Dr H. M. Patterson, Dr J. M. Hamilton, and Dr S. P. Patterson have been resident physicians. The last named is the present resident physician.

For many years a thriving business was carried on in the harness and saddlery business. First by John Haines, who employed three or four hands. After him William Fertig, who employed as many, and handsome returns were realized by both. The business is now in the hands of William Grose & Son.

Before the peripatetic children of Israel brought ready made clothing in our county, tailoring was a good business at Huntersville. Messrs Campbell and John and James Holden turned out a great deal of work. Three or four hands would be busy much of the time, especially in the fall and early winter, or when there were weddings in prospect. Weddings also gave the saddlers a goodly share of business. It was considered in good form for the bride to have a new outfit, horse, saddle, and bridle. The groom would not think he had much of a chance for success if he did not do his courting and visiting on a new saddle and bridle, all made at Huntersville.

For a long while blacksmithing was an excellent business, as there was so much horse shoeing and wagon repairing to do for the teamsters, and so few

shops of any pretensions anywhere near. Finley's shop stood at the intersection of the Cummings Creek and Marlinton roads. Three or four hands seemed to have all they could do. No traces of it now remain.

Jack Tidd, a man of herculean strength and physical proportions, carried on the work in a large shop that stood in the corner now occupied by H. S. Rucker's law office. Jack Tidd was succeeded by William Dille, whose skill as an artisan was thought to be rather remarkable. The business is now in the hands of G. W. Ginger.

For a long series of years, however, nothing seemed more flourishing than the hostelry business in conjunction with salooning. One of the principal hotels, and where the colonels usually had their headquarters, was located about where the Loury store house now stands. It was conducted by J. Williams, John Bussard, John Holden, Porterfield Wallace, I. C. Carpenter, and E. Campbell in succession, but was burned in the great fire of 1852. The other hotel was managed by William Gibson, John Haines, and Davis Hamilton in succession, but was burned during the war by the federal troops. About the year 1848 license for salooning was refused by the court, which course has been uniformly sustained from that day to this.

In regard to educational interests, Huntersville has had some good schools. About the year 1841 a chartered Academy was built near the place now occupied by Dr Patterson's residence. The names of the teachers, as now remembered, were J. C. Humphries, from Greenville, Augusta County, A. Crawford, of Browns-

burg, Va., Rev T. P. W. Magruder, from Maryland, J. Woods Price, and a Professor Miller, from Pennsylvania.

To Huntersville is due the distinction of being the first place in Pocahontas where a Sunday school was held throughout the year. In the year 1839, Rev J. M. Harris, a young minister in broken health, was advised to come to the mountains as a relief for bronchial troubles. He was a native of Pennsylvania, and in his preparation for the ministry he was a student of such brilliant promise that he was called to do his first preaching by a church in New Orleans. His charge has since become the foremost Presbyterian church in the city, and achieved a national reputation under the ministry of Dr Palmer.

For a time it looked as if Mr Harris were destined to be a pulpit star of the first magnitude. Nervous prostration disabled him, and he resorted to the Virginia mountains as his forlorn hope for health. In a few weeks after reaching Huntersville he opened school, and also gathered a Sabbath school. His school room was in a building near where the Methodist church now stands, and was in after years used by Dr Matt. Wallace as a physician's office. After a sojourn at Huntersville for a year or two, his health improved y good deal. It was in his room at Holden's Hotel the writer saw what a Greek Testament and Hebrew Bible looked like, and came to the conclusion that it would require something more than human to be able to make any sense out of books printed with something that looked more like grammatical bug tracks

and systematic fly specks than printed words.

When Mr Harris left Huntersville he went to Hampshire County. There he married a lady of considerable wealth, and lived for many years in an isolated mountain home, where it was high and dry. He had a fine library, the leading newspapers, reviews, and magazines, and kept well informed as to what was going on in the world. He tried to do good when opportunities permitted, though expecting any year might be his last. Mr Harris was in early life the peer of Summerfield, and both entered the ministry about the same time. Summerfield's career was brief, but brilliant and famous. Harris by coming to the mountains had a career that was long, but useful and happy.

The first published notice of preaching services at Huntersville occurs in the diary of the Rev S. B. Witt, a Baptist minister. He spent a year or two in pioneer preaching in Pocahontas, Bath, and Greenbrier Counties, about 1823-24. During the time of his first visit to Huntersville there was a dancing school in progress. The dancing master very politely suspended when time for preaching came, and took his scholars to hear the seamon. Soon as the preaching was over the class re-assembled and finished the lesson at a later hour. Here is an extract from Dr Witt's diary :

SEPTEMBER 18, 1824.—Preached to-day at Huntersville to a considerable congregation. At this place there is a dancing school just commencing, and as soon as the meeting was over the greater part of the congregation returned to the ball room and commenced

dancing. Oh, that I may be the honored instrument in the hands of the Almighty of bringing them to the knowledge of the truth.

Dr Witt became a noted minister in Prince Edward County, and gathered a church of seven or eight hundred members on Sandy River. The writer while a student at the seminary heard Dr Witt preach the memorial sermon of a wealthy citizen, who committed suicide on his wife's grave a short time after her death. The writer led the singing of the hymns. After the service we made Dr Witt's acquaintance. The venerable man had not forgotten about the dance, and mentioned the Poages and Callisons as persons he well remembered. Dr Witt was quite independent, even wealthy, and spent his old age in a charming country home in the limits of the grand congregation he had gathered in a pastorate of nearly thirty years duration. S. B. Witth, Jr., a Richmond lawyer, is his son.

For many years religious services were held in the courthouse. Then when the academy was built in 1842 it was used as a place of worship by Methodists of all branches, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians. The Presbyterian church afterwards became the place where all denominations generally worshipped. This building was erected about the year 1855. It was used for barracks during the war and was much defaced.

In the early summer of 1865 the Rev M. D. Dunlap and W. T. Price were engaged in the first sacramental meeting held after the war. A detachment of federal troops from Buckhannon passed through the town, rode

around the church, looked in at the broken windows, examined the horses with critical eyes, and religious services were going on all the while without even pausing. Sermon and sacramental services over, Mr Dunlap, who had rode in from the country that morning and hitched his horse near the church, went to get his horse and found that it had been taken away as a "branded horse." During Averill's retreat through the Levels this horse was abandoned as worn out. Mr Dunlap had taken it up and put it in good condition. The venerable preacher had to return to his home at Hillsboro on a borrowed horse.

Ten or eleven years since the Methodist church was built on its present site, and so for the present the town is well provided with churches.

Five or six years ago the Masonic fraternity of Pocahontas County, represented by the Huntersville Lodge, needed a lodge room. Arrangements mutually satisfactory were made with the trusteeship of the Presbyterian church, and the building was enlarged and renovated in very attractive style. The inception and completion of this arrangement is largely due to James H. Doyle.

Nature seems to have marked Huntersville and vicinity as designed for something of more than ordinary importance. The locality is approachable from the four quarters of the earth by valleys converging here. The beauty of the scenery everywhere displayed is something phenomenal, in the view of all who have eyes to appreciate whatever is picturesque in mountains, forest and streams. The air is pure and exhilarating. Min-

eral waters abound in profusion, chalybeate, alum, and sulphur. The most remarkable, however, are the arsenious-lithia fountains that bubble up in the Curry Meadow, in volume sufficient to meet the needs of a world of health seeking people requiring the benefits of lithia remedies.